

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office Action dated November 17, 2006 has been received and reviewed. This response is directed to that action.

Claims 1,9 and 29 have been amended. Claims 13-18 have been cancelled. Claims 31 through 38 are new. Support for the amendment to claim 1 can be found in claims 14-17 as originally filed, and support for the amendment to claim 29 can be found in claim 1 as originally filed. The amendment to claim 9 includes the dependency to claim 1, which was mistakenly left out of the previously entered amendment. Support for new claims 31-37 can be found throughout the specification, and in claims 2, 6, 9, 11, 19, 26, 27 and 30 as originally filed. No new matter is believed to have been added.

The applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the pending claims based on the following remarks.

Claim Rejections- 35 U.S.C. §103

The Examiner rejected claims 1-2, 6-16, 18-23, 26-28 and 30 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Katsuda et al. (US 5,644,866) in view of Harwig et al. (US 6,909,840). The Examiner stated, however, that claims 17 and 29 were allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 1, as presently amended, incorporates the limitations of claim 17 and all intervening claims, and claim 29 has been rewritten in independent form to include the base claim and all intervening claims. The applicants therefore submit that the present claims are nonobvious over the prior art, and respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw these rejections, and allow the case to proceed to issue.

Based on the foregoing, the applicants believe the claims are now in condition for allowance, and such favorable action is respectfully requested. If any issues remain, the resolution of which can be advanced through a telephone conference, the Examiner is invited to contact the applicant's attorney at the phone number listed below.

CONDITIONAL PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME

If entry and consideration of the amendments above requires an extension of time, Applicants respectfully request that this be considered a petition therefor. The Assistant Commissioner is authorized to charge any fee(s) due in this connection to Deposit Account No. 14-1263.

ADDITIONAL FEE

Please charge any insufficiency of fees, or credit any excess, to Deposit Account No. 14-1263.

Respectfully submitted,
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